

A 2020 vision for change



The Independent Group
for Change

The Independent Group: a 2020 vision for change

Introduction

Politics is broken. The main political parties in the UK have shifted to the ideological fringes and taken up populist positions. Yet the mainstream British public aren't convinced that the existing parties are right for the country. They are wary of politicians promising to solve all their problems with appeals to dog-whistle prejudice or re-heat-ed dogma.

At the Independent Group for Change we believe the core values and instincts of the British people still hold true; values of fairness, responsibility, truthfulness, opportunity, parliamentary democracy and long-termism. It is of little use for those in the political mainstream merely to warn of the dangers of the hard right or the hard left. Instead, we believe it is our responsibility, in the centre ground, to assert the freestanding and contemporary relevance of these key values. The centre of British politics has to regain confidence and provide positive ideas that are compelling, appropriate and deliverable. To do this, we need policies that embody the values we hold.

We are concerned that the offer before the public in the general election on 12th December from the main political parties risks an outcome that deepens the crisis in our country, not lessens it. The entire energy of last Parliament was focused on resolving the Brexit question – and our Independent Group MPs rightly fought unequivocally for the UK to retain its place at the heart of Europe, so our values can shape the world and our economy benefit from access to our neighbouring markets. But a general election is about more than Brexit; it is about the way we hope our country will be governed and the approach our elected representatives will take to decisions that may yet be unforeseen.

This short policy statement for the 2019 general election is not an exhaustive list of policies or a comprehensive programme by any means. In an era where the norms we have lived by can no longer be taken for granted, ours are values which need to be more proudly asserted and defended when the old political parties no longer will do so. That is why we feel it is our duty to seek re-election in the constituencies we have represented, so that the public in these communities at least do not feel they only have a choice of one extreme or the other.

The Independent Group for Change - Our Values

1. Ours is a great country, of which people are rightly proud, where the first duty of government must be to defend its people and do whatever it takes to safeguard Britain's national security.

2. Britain works best as a diverse, mixed social market economy, in which well-regulated private enterprise can reward aspiration and drive economic progress and where government has the responsibility to ensure the sound stewardship of taxpayers' money and a stable, fair and balanced economy.

3. A strong economy means we can invest in our public services. We believe the collective provision of public services and the NHS can be delivered through government action, improving health and educational life chances, protecting the public, safeguarding the vulnerable, ensuring dignity at every stage of life and placing individuals at the heart of decision-making.

4. The people of this country have the ability to create fairer, more prosperous communities for present and future generations. We believe that this creativity is best realised in a society which fosters individual freedom and supports all families.

5. The barriers of poverty, prejudice and discrimination facing individuals should be removed and advancement occur on the basis of merit, with inequalities reduced through the extension of opportunity, giving individuals the skills and means to open new doors and fulfil their ambitions.

6. Individuals are capable of taking responsibility if opportunities are offered to them, everybody can and should make a contribution to society and that contribution should be recognised. Paid work should be secure and pay should be fair.

The Independent Group for Change - Our Values

7. Our free media, the rule of law, and our open, tolerant and respectful democratic society should be cherished and renewed.

8. We believe that our parliamentary democracy in which our elected representatives deliberate, decide and provide leadership, held accountable by their whole electorate is the best system of representing the views of the British people.

9. In order to face the challenges and opportunities presented by globalisation, migration and technological advances, we believe the multilateral, international rules-based order must be strengthened and reformed. We believe in maintaining strong alliances with our closest European and international allies on trade, regulation, defence, security and counter-terrorism.

10. As part of the global community we have a responsibility to future generations to protect our environment, safeguard the planet, plan development sustainably and to act on the urgency of climate change.

11. Power should be devolved to the most appropriate level, trusting and involving local communities. More powers and representation should be given to local government to act in the best interests of their communities.

Our 2020 Vision

Top priorities

- Hold a People's Vote on Brexit, campaigning for remain.
- Pursue centre ground values of fairness, responsibility, truthfulness, opportunity, advocating the importance of representative democracy and long-termism.
- Increase investment in health and social care by equalising tax rates for dividend income with the rate for earned income.
- Achieve carbon net zero by 2045. Transition away from sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030 and phase out non-essential plastics by 2025.

Brexit

- Put the question of Brexit back to the British people for a final say, campaigning for the UK to remain in the European Union.
- Maintain strong alliances with our closest European and international allies on trade, regulation, defence, security, the environment, aid, and counter-terrorism.

NHS & care

- Raise new resources for health & social care by equalising the tax rate on 'unearned' dividend income with the rate levied on earned income. The 1998 Commission on Long Term Care recommended free personal care should be the goal across the UK, an ambition which could be fulfilled if these revenues were earmarked accordingly.

- Legal right for employees to attend GP or hospital appointments.
- Advice services to become a statutory function, where every £1 invested in advice services saves the taxpayer around £10 in social and economic benefits and service costs.
- NHS commissioning to become accountable with a role for local government, with powers to co-opt medical professionals locally.
- Cross-party commission to finally address long term elderly social care finance.

Crime & Justice

- Victims and witnesses of crime to be supported more proactively in court proceedings.
- New sentencing powers and sanctions tailored to the offence with stronger deterrent effect, for instance, bans from driving or from social media.
- Separating Parents Information Programme would be made compulsory alongside a new mediation out-of-court pathway in circumstances of parental separation.

Our 2020 Vision

Education & Skills

- Financial literacy and oracy (the ability to speak and listen well) to be included in the national curriculum.
- School health workers introduced in primary and secondary schools, to assist teachers in picking up on ill-health, mental health and child protection issues so they can be resolved effectively.
- 20-week retraining sabbatical for those in need of a mid-career skills boost, accompanied by a stipend grant to sustain those individuals during their time retraining on such a programme.
- Tax break to help individuals with relocation costs if they are seeking new job roles across the country.
- Tax breaks for successful employers who offer short work placements to students about to leave school.

Environment

- Reach carbon net zero by 2045.
- Transition away from sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030.
- Phase out non-essential single-use plastics by 2025.
- Higher standards for new-build housing, with all new stock built to carbon neutral standards by 2025.
- Develop a diverse energy base using a range of renewables, including hydrogen and tidal.
- Introduce the 'polluter pays principle' so those creating potentially harmful outputs carry the costs of managing and preventing damage to the environment, and society at large.

Work and benefits

- Rights for employees and those working on contract to be notified of their shifts at least one month in advance.
- The right for all employees to take bereavement leave following a death in the immediate family.
- Clearer rights for parents to automatically qualify for state pension national insurance contribution rights until their child is 16.
- Lower the cap on pension fund management fees to better reward long-term savers
- Companies that offer longer term secure career contracts to their staff would have this commitment reflected in a company tax break.
- An auto-enrolment into a basic level of critical illness and life insurance, with a clear right to opt-out if existing policies are already in place.

Housing

- Partnerships between public and private sector to deliver large-scale affordable housing in areas of high demand. Rather than prioritise borrowing for mass renationalisation purposes, a higher priority is the need for investment in social housing assets.
- Business and agricultural property relief to be radically scaled back to generate revenues for social housing.

Our 2020 Vision

Economy

- Fiscally responsible economic stimulus: the Office for Budget Responsibility, in conjunction with a restructured National Infrastructure Commission, to implement a long-term 'fiscal trigger' mechanism able to advise government on the level of stimulus that could be delivered over the medium and long term across a range of investment options, with an evidence-led analysis of how viable the potential call on public finances could be.
- International Tax Avoidance Treaty, enforced through a new body at the United Nations.
- Drive out potential conflicts of interest from existing regulatory arrangements with stronger democratic oversight of regulators, and a great emphasis on the 'public benefit interest' in our corporate governance.
- Harmonised flat rate of 30% for pensions tax relief to reward those who save and are on low or middle incomes.

Immigration

- Support free movement of people across Europe as with our current membership of the EU.
- Foreign students would be welcomed as they contribute and enrich university communities and our economy.
- E-identity system linked to NI numbers to measure and enforce fair immigration rules.
- Communities with sharp population changes to be given greater support and protection with a Migration Impact Fund.

Transport

- Support new capacity on rail continuing with the HS2 line connecting the East Midlands and Yorkshire.
- Improving bus services by allowing areas beyond London similar powers to regulate.

Democracy

- Second chamber to be reformed with a fairer representation of the elected bodies from each of the nations, regions and local government.
- Real powers for elected mayors with clearer accountabilities to local residents with greater devolution of power to a local level across all layers of government.
- Compulsory voting in the UK with provision for abstention.
- A summit of the UK's smaller political parties to discuss breaking "the cartel" of bigger established parties on election rules, to ensure new voices have a fairer hearing in British politics.
- Cross-party working to become more the 'norm' in Westminster with a review of constitutional and governance arrangement to encourage improved cross-party behaviour.

A 2020 Vision For Change

Remain **in Europe**

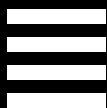
Remain **prosperous**

Remain **healthy**

Remain **united on tackling climate change**

Remain **stronger in the world**

**Vote for
The Independent Group
for Change on 12 December**



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